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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 004624

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SUBJECT: MFA ON PLANNED PRC NAVAL DEPLOYMENT TO COMBAT GULF
OF ADEN PIRACY

Classified By: DCM Daniel Piccata. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: China intends to deploy two destroyers and a support vessel to the Gulf of Aden and waters off the Somali coast to combat piracy, MFA North American Affairs Department Deputy Director General Zheng Zeguang informed the DCM on December 21. The ships plan to sail from China December 26 and will operate under relevant UN Security Council resolutions and international law. The Chinese are willing to participate in intelligence sharing with relevant countries, including the United States, and in humanitarian operations as necessary, according to Zheng. (MFA-provided English text of the demarche is in para 7 below.) End Summary.

China Will Deploy Ships

¶2. (C) On December 21, MFA North American and Oceanian Affairs Department DDG Zheng Zeguang informed the DCM that China intends to deploy naval vessels to the Gulf of Aden and waters off the Somali coast in response to recent UNSC resolutions (UNSCRs). Zheng noted that piracy poses a serious threat to Chinese ships and crews, has attracted international attention and has become a menace to maritime safety and international shipping. As a result, Zheng continued, the United Nations has authorized actions against the pirates under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to fight piracy off the Somali coast. In addition, the Somali Provisional Government has invited nations into its territorial waters for the same purpose. Zheng acknowledged that NATO and other forces are already on the scene.

¶3. (C) Zheng advised that, in accordance with relevant UNSCRs and in line with the practices of other countries, China has decided to dispatch ships to the region. The main task of these vessels is to ensure the safety of Chinese shipping and shipboard personnel. In addition, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) ships will work to ensure the safety of vessels delivering humanitarian relief provided by the World Food Programme and other humanitarian organizations. While not providing ship names or hull numbers, Zheng did explain that the PLAN flotilla will comprise two destroyers and one depot/supply ship (3 total) and that the flotilla will carry two ship-borne helicopters. The ships' component will include "several dozen" naval Special Forces combatants, according to Zheng. The flotilla plans to set sail December 26 from a Chinese port. (NOTE: Zheng provided no further information but press reports indicate the ships will depart

Sanya and are part of the PLAN Southern Fleet. Xinhua reports that the two warships are the Haikou, a Luyang-11 Class DDG Hull number 171, and the Wuhan, a Type 52B Luyang Class DDG Hull number 169)

Willingness to Cooperate

14. (C) Zheng said that the Chinese ships will conduct their escort operation in strict compliance with UNSCRs and international law and are willing to participate in intelligence sharing with relevant countries, including the United States, as well as in humanitarian operations, as necessary. China hopes its participation will "receive understanding, support and cooperation" from the United States.

15. (C) Zheng noted that China and the United States have enjoyed good communications about the need to counter piracy off the coast of Somalia. For example, he said, on behalf of the Foreign Minister Chinese VFM He Yafei attended the December 16 UN Security Council Ministerial that unanimously approved UNSCR 1851. During that meeting, Zheng advised, China worked with participating countries to enable the rapid adoption of UNSCR 1851. This, Zheng emphasized, reflects the solidarity of the international community.

What Zheng Did Not Say

16. (C) Zheng provided no information about the PLAN's

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logistics plans, refueling needs, communications protocols or whether the ships intend to operate independently or as part of the multinational force in the region.

Non-Paper

17. (SBU) On December 22, MFA sent by fax a non-paper providing the text of DDG Zheng's demarche. Begin Text:

I am instructed to brief you on China's decision to send naval ships to the Gulf of Aden and waters off the Somali coast for an escort operation.

Since the beginning of the year, acts of piracy have become increasingly rampant in the waters off the Somali coast. Over 100 cases of pirate attacks and hijacking incidents have taken place, involving more than 30 vessels and 600 crew members from dozens of countries. This year, a total of seven Chinese-flagged or China-owned foreign-flagged vessels have been hijacked. In September, cargo ship "Great Creation" of Hong Kong, China, with 24 Chinese sailors on board was seized by Somali pirates. In November, Chinese fishing vessel "Tian Yu No. 8" was captured in Kenyan waters, and 25 crew members including 17 Chinese were taken hostage and remain in captivity today. On 17 December, Chinese cargo ship "ZHEN HUA 4" with 30 Chinese crew members on board was attacked by Somali pirates. There were also Chinese crew members aboard hijacked foreign vessels. Frequent pirate attacks and hijackings targeting Chinese vessels and crew have posed a serious threat to the safety of their life and property and aroused utmost concern from the Chinese Government and the general public.

Piracy off the coast of Somalia has attracted immense international attention as it has become an international menace posing a grave threat to international shipping, maritime trade and security at sea. The UN Security Council has adopted several resolutions, authorizing member states to act under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations to fight piracy in Somali waters. The Transitional Federal Government of Somalia has also called on countries to enter into its territorial waters to combat piracy. NATO, the EU

and a number of countries have already sent their warships to waters off the Somali coast to protect merchant ships and safeguard the security of this important waterway.

China supports the relevant resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council. In line with these resolutions and with reference to the practice of relevant countries, the Chinese Government has decided to send naval ships to the Gulf of Aden and waters off the Somali coast for an escort operation.

Their main task is to ensure the safety of Chinese vessels and personnel on board passing through the Gulf of Aden and waters off the Somali coast, and the safety of vessels delivering humanitarian supplies for the World Food Program and other international organizations. The Chinese flotilla will consist of two destroyers, one depot ship and two shipboard helicopters. In addition, there will be several dozen Navy Special Forces soldiers on board. The flotilla is scheduled to sail on 26 December 2008.

The Chinese naval ships will conduct their escort operation in strict compliance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions and international law and are willing to engage in such cooperation as intelligence and information sharing with escort fleets from relevant countries including the United States. They will also participate in humanitarian assistance operations when necessary.

In the spirit of friendship and cooperation, I have briefed you on the foregoing decision. I hope that the escort operation of the Chinese navy will receive understanding, support and cooperation of the United States.

China and the United States have maintained good communication and consultation in combating piracy in Somali waters. Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice have recently made a couple of phone calls to exchange views on this issue. At the invitation of

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the United States, Vice Minister He Yafei, on behalf of Minister Yang, attended the ministerial meeting of the Security Council and made joint efforts with relevant parties to adopt a new resolution, which fully demonstrated once again the solidarity, confidence and strong will of the international community to combat piracy in Somali waters. The Chinese side will continue to keep in close contact and consultation with the United States and other members of the international community to properly resolve the scourge of piracy in Somali waters.

End Text.
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